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24 May 1968

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TO : [REDACTED] (SAVA)

THROUGH: Chief, Special Advisor for Vietnamese Affairs (SAVA)
Chief, International Research Area, OER
Chief, International Services Division, OER

FROM : Chief, Construction Branch, OER

SUBJECT: General Terrain Features and Status of Major Roads in Laotian Panhandle West of DMZ

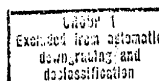
1. In general, this section of the Laotian Panhandle consists of jungle-covered karst hills and narrow meandering river valleys, which gradually widen as the rivers flow westwards into a savannah covered plain.

2. The composition of the soil in this area is basically sandy-silt and silty-clay, washed off the higher terrain over the centuries by the perennial monsoons. The soil layers in the higher elevations and in the Mi Gia Pass area average 2-6 feet deep, but depths of 6-20 feet are common in the valleys. South of Route 9, the soil is a conglomeration of silty-sand, silt, and silty-clay. This particular composition has a better loadbearing capability than the soil in the valleys farther north. Each year the enemy attempts to alleviate troublespots in the road sections traversing the lowlands by building bypasses through higher terrain, realigning some sections, and reconstructing those sections that cannot be avoided.

3. Following is a brief description of the major roads.

- a) Route 9: This road is in good condition although most of the old portions that had been asphalted are now only crushed or packed rock with an application of bituminous materials. The road is at least 12-16 feet wide, with occasional wider sections. The road has a good all-weather capability.
- b) Route 911: This road section between Routes 23 and 912 is fairly straight but traverses a relatively low sandy area which presents serious rainy season problems. Most of the roadway is 10-12 feet wide, but a few sections are wide enough to accommodate two way traffic. A few portions are corduroyed for limited wet-weather traffic.

The portion of route 911 between Routes 912 and 9, however, is narrow with sharp curves. This section traverses higher terrain and the better soil conditions provides a good, sometimes stony, road surface. Dense jungle hides much of the

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roadbed from aerial observation. In addition, many short bypasses permit movement around frequently interdicted sections.

- c) Route 912: This mountainous road was well constructed in 1966 and has good grades and drainage. Some of the road in the higher terrain near the border has been surfaced with gravel, while other sections have been corduroyed. There are several straight stretches near the North Vietnamese border. Portions of this road have been widened to 20 feet or more; the remainder is some 10-12 feet.
- d) Routes 92 and 922: These routes are improved dirt roads approximately 10 feet wide. Route 92 running in a general north-south direction passes through stony hills covered with dense jungle. Route 922 near the South Vietnamese border traverses through an area of open, hilly terrain. Parts of Route 922 have been corduroyed and strengthened by pierced-steel-planking torn from abandoned airfields in the A Chau Valley. Due to the hilly terrain there are few straight stretches of roads on either route.
- e) Route 23: Each year this road west of its junction with Route 911 suffers extensive flooding during the rainy season because it traverses a particularly low region. The enemy is continually constructing bypasses through higher terrain, but these bypasses usually contain sharp curves and switchbacks.

This general area is an open savannah plain which is no longer heavily used by the enemy for the movement of men and supplies southward to South Vietnam.

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